

Some Thoughts on Wider Peace-keeping and the Key Role that Military Engineering Plays

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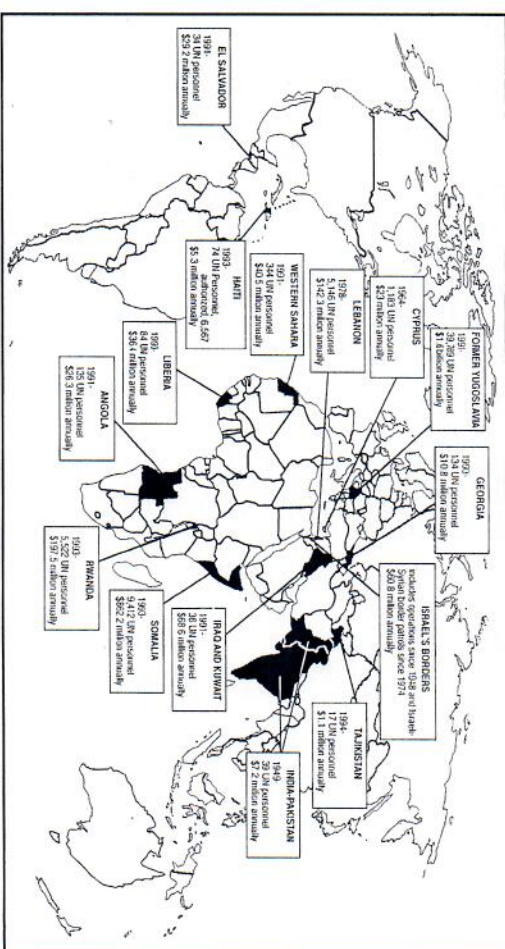
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INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War marked a major watershed in UN peace-keeping. It not only led to an increase in the number of operationsⁱ (*see map opposite*) but also to a shift in emphasis from interstate missions to intrastate ones (4). The consequence of the latter has been the development of a new dimension to UN peace-keeping. Traditionally peace-keepingⁱⁱ involved dealing with governments in conflictⁱⁱⁱ, however, in the case of intrastate conflicts there is often no government to deal with, hence aspects such as the supervision of elections, dealing with non-government organizations, and the provision of humanitarian aid become vital. The execution of these objectives are termed "wider peace-keeping"^{iv} tasks. It is worth

emphasizing that wider peace-keeping doctrine is in its infancy and is still evolving to the extent that it has not been accepted by all in its present format (6). Furthermore, the term "wider peace-keeping" is essentially unique to British military literature and appears not (yet) to have been adopted in our civilian literature^v nor in that of other nations.

Here one wishes to consider the pivotal role of military engineering in achieving "success" in wider peace-keeping. The ambiguities in defining success in these operations are then discussed as well as political flaws in the UN that inhibit the effective implementation of wider peace-keeping. Finally, an examination of the importance of military engineering at an operational level and political brokering at a geopolitical level in future wider



Map showing UN peace-keeping operations around the world (as of January 1995).

peace-keeping operations is also made. These factors are reviewed in relation to wider peace-keeping aspects of the Bosnian and Rwandan missions, not necessarily because these provide the best examples but because they are the best documented (8, 16).

WIDER PEACE-KEEPING - AIMS

The integral aim of wider peace-keeping is the re-establishment of a nation from a state of anarchy such that it is able to govern itself in a state of stability. This is done with the consent of the belligerent parties and as impartially as possible. To this end a number of operational tasks exists within wider peace-keeping doctrine (11) which sets out to achieve this aim.^{vi} These are summarized in Table 1 (over the page), from which can be seen that the principal military engineering requirements are associated with the provision of military assistance, ie, support of civil affairs programmes such as the supply of maintenance of civil infrastructure facilities, eg, the provision of shelters, waste disposal facilities and electrical power, and the procurement, storage and distribution of water.

Additional contributions are the location, removal and disposal of mines and unexploded ordnance (5). Engineer roles in the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies (15) include the re-opening or construction of supply routes. These direct tasks augment the aim of wider peace-keeping due to the fact that the scale of the tasks is often such that local help is required and local supplies of construction materials need to be procured. This helps to re-establish an economic base to the country (15) and broadens the skill base of the indigenous population (analogous to the schemes used in development areas in the UK and around Europe (eg, The Welsh Development Agency)).

Though military engineering's primary role lies in the above-mentioned areas, the application of traditional engineer roles to assist those involved with conflict prevention, demobilization and guarantee and denial of movement tasks is also substantial. These military personnel require accommodation, essential services, working bases and accurate mapping in operational areas (13). The contribution that military engineering makes toward the operational tasks involved in wider

- i Out of the 34 peace-keeping operations established to date, 15 were established in the first 40 years of the UN (1948 to 1988), while 19 have been established since 1989 (1).
- ii Defined as "operations carried out with the consent of the belligerent parties in support of efforts to achieve or maintain peace in order to promote security and sustain life in areas of potential or actual conflict." (11).
- iii With the exception of the Congo 1960 to 1964 and the Lebanon 1978. For details see (10).
- iv Defined as "the wider aspects of Peace-keeping operations carried out with the consent of the belligerent parties but in an environment that may be highly volatile." (11).

v For example, it is referred to as "post conflict peace building" by Bertman (1995). "Peace building" by Brechtman (1995), probably due to the terminology used in Boutros Boutros-Ghali's report "Agenda for Peace" (1992). Indeed Gouding (1993) actually considers two aspects of peace-keeping: "Implementation of a Comprehensive Settlement" and "Delivery of Humanitarian Relief" as separate - both of which are integral aspects of wider peace-keeping (11).

vi Though a significant proportion of "Army Field Manual" Volume 5 is dedicated to other facets of wider peace-keeping, these other aspects largely arise due to the need to implement the tasks shown in Table 1, for example, the maintaining of impartiality and consent when carrying out these tasks. These are not considered here but are referred to later.

Operational Task	Description of Task
Conflict prevention.	Activity that seeks to anticipate and forestall conflict. It embraces early warning, surveillance, stabilizing measures and preventive deployment. The latter often requiring large scale deployment backed up by a substantial reinforcement and support capability.
Demobilization operations.	The controlled withdrawal, demobilization and rehabilitation of belligerents. Something that in this context would be carried out with the prior agreement of the parties concerned.
Military assistance.	All forms of mandated military assistance rendered by a wider peace-keeping force to a foreign civil authority and refers to such as supervising a transfer of power, reforming security forces and developing or supporting civil infrastructure facilities. The maintenance of law and order is foundational to such activity.
Humanitarian relief.	Operations seek to meet the needs of residence, refugees, or displaced persons. They may be conducted independently by the military or in support of aid agencies. They are likely to involve such things such as the protection of supply deliveries and relief workers, and the establishment, support and protection of safe havens. Such operations may also include administrative, coordination and logistical activities to support humanitarian relief efforts.
Guarantee and denial of movement.	Those operations that are mandated to guarantee or deny movement by air, land or sea in particular areas over certain routes. The denial of movement usually focuses on the establishment of no-fly zones. Assets involved (often warships and aircraft) deem that such tasks are controlled at strategic or operational level.

Table 1. Wider peace-keeping operational tasks (after Army Field Manual, Volume 5 (1995))

peace-keeping is summarized in Table 2, opposite. Examples and references from Bosnia and Rwanda are also shown.

From the above it can be seen that at operational level military engineering should, in theory, be vital to the effective implementation of wider peace-keeping programmes. Without it forces required to establish peace are unable to carry out their tasks effectively and, more significantly, the very essence of wider peace-keeping, the re-establishment of civil and economic normality via infrastructure taskings and minefield clearance, are unable to be carried out. In this context therefore it would seem that military engineering is indeed the key to wider peace-keeping.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE

It has become evident, however, that despite the implementation of military engineering in the majority of wider peace-keeping operations, these missions have met with mixed success. To consider the reason for this, one needs to know how these operations are assessed in terms of "success" and "failure". Despite the definition in "Army Field Manual" Volume 5 (1995) of success being "The rate at which the sum total of the desired activities progress toward the achievement of the UN mandate", in practice this proves somewhat unsatisfactory. Wider peace-keeping mandates are not always clear and various governments expect different things from UN decisions. Therefore assessment of such operations is somewhat ambiguous – not only in terms of success and

failure, but also in the time-frame used to determine the durability of the results. For example, in the case of Bosnia was the mission successful because it saved lives and managed to contain the conflict in Europe or rather a failure because the UN did not stand up to aggression, genocide and the forced movement of people?(8). In the case of Rwanda, though some form of rehabilitation was re-introduced, (12) this only occurred after the execution of 500,000 and the displacement of 4.7 million people (6) – despite the fact that the UN had a presence from the very outset of the troubles (16).

INFLUENCING FACTORS

OTHER more influential factors are likely to affect wider peace-keeping operations. These factors are attributed, by many commentators, to lie at a political level, particularly those associated with the politics of the UN. The two most quoted political problem areas in wider peace-keeping operations, which may have contributed to their failings, are political and structural inadequacies of the UN, and doctrinal flaws in wider peace-keeping.

The UN, by its very nature, is a highly complex political machine (18, 7, 14). With respect to intrastate peace-keeping missions the situation is augmented by the fact such missions intervene in matters that are of "domestic jurisdiction", thereby raising the politics of sovereignty (9). Firstly, informed decision-making and the formation of the appropriate mandates is considered

Operational Tasks	Engineer Roles	Examples	References
Conflict prevention and demobilization operations.	Construction of accommodation. Provision of security facilities. Maintenance of camps.	Accommodation for French, British and Dutch troops on Mount Igman and throughout the rest of Bosnia. Support of the establishment of BRITCON bases (Rwanda). Upgrade of protection levels (Bosnia). Maintaining UNPROFOR camps in Op Grapple 5 (Bosnia).	Lilleyman, Apr 96 James, Aug 95 Ulrich, Aug 95 Ulrich, Aug 95
Military assistance.	Minefield clearance. Powerline repair, hospital refurbishment water and sewage reconnection and route repairs. Well drilling for water.	Monitoring of minefield clearance/markings (Bosnia). Support key to Op Grapple 5 infrastructure projects (Bosnia). Assist the restoration of essential services and facilities throughout the country (Rwanda). Well drilling in Bosnia. Produce potable water for BRITCON refugees (Rwanda).	Ulrich, Aug 95 Buttery, Dec 94 James, Aug 95 Ulrich, Aug 95 James, Aug 95 Wye, Aug 94 James, Aug 95
Humanitarian relief.	Construction and maintenance of aid routes. Airfield support operations.	Rome Triangle and Diamond (Bosnia). Maintain and repair work on MSR and other routes in Rwanda.	Ulrich, Aug 95 James, Aug 95
Guarantee and denial of movement.		39 Engineer Regiment.	

Table 2. Operational tasks in wider peace-keeping and engineer roles in Rwanda and Bosnia.

poor.^{vii} For example, in Croatia the UN came between the breakaway Serbs and nationalist Croats, each with unfinished political agendas (8). Though UNPROFOR's mandate allowed weapons impoundment, most of the former Yugoslav soldiers' equipment was only withdrawn. This resulted in pushing the conflict around, the UN troops acting, in effect, as guardians of the territorial situation that the Zagreb government rejected as a permanent solution. Therefore whatever initial stability the UN force brought to Croatia at its time of deployment, it allowed the Croats time to rebuild its military power as a prelude to further war and civilian suffering. In the case of Rwanda, the initial contingent of UN peace-keepers (a Belgian and Bangladeshi force) actually withdrew prior to the climax of the violence due to the lack of a sensible mandate, brought about largely by a poorly informed security council. Furthermore, in the case of the Croatian situation, the timing of the UN intervention was questionable; many argue (8) that the UN forces should not have been

deployed into such a volatile environment as the situation was hardly conducive to peace. The inadequacies of UN mandate formulation, then, makes the matching of political goals and military end-states extremely difficult. Military commanders find that political objectives fail to reflect the situation on the ground and as a result mission creep develops which then hinders the effectiveness of such operations.

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

ADDITIONAL flaws include the problems of political will. It is likely that the reason for UNIMAR II (United Nations Assistance Mission) for Rwanda being slow to respond to the genocide in that country was due to the lack of willingness of nations to respond. At the time (1994) the Somali operation was floundering (16) and nations (especially the United States) were reluctant to participate in another commitment in a conflict-ridden, failing state. Further reasons for lack of political will is the open-ended nature of wider peace-keeping operations which makes

vii Which at an operational level has the effect of the production of poor rules of engagement and poor command and control set-ups for the multinational forces involved.(1)

them potentially costly^{viii} and politically unattractive. This prevents governments from willingly committing troops immediately thus further hindering the potential for an effective solution by allowing the situation to deteriorate.^{ix}

POOR DOCTRINE

PROBLEMS with wider peace-keeping doctrine have also impeded the effectiveness of these missions. The most salient problems with the doctrine are maintaining impartiality and the need for consent throughout operations (6). Comanagh (6) more than adequately highlights the situation, using Rwanda as an example.

The maintenance of impartiality is difficult as every action by the UN will affect the local balance of power. Humanitarian intervention, for example, favours whichever faction is nearest to defeat and is sure to anger those factions which lose political or military leverage. Also, mandates that rely on the consent of all parties are difficult to reconcile with those that require a peace operation to become partisan to one side or the other (8). In Bosnia this was exemplified by the safe-area mission. Though the UN was able to protect the safe areas, it never seriously punished any major infringement of these areas for fear of Bosnia-Serb retaliation to humanitarian missions throughout the whole of Bosnia. Alternatively, had the UN been more willing to deal with these attacks they could have assessed the conflict and supported the least objectionable party in order to end the stalemate in a shorter time.

SUMMARY

THE UN is, at its most basic, a political animal that imposes its will on nations by exercising its (collective) economic, diplomatic and military power. As a consequence the success of any of its operations, including those of wider peace-keeping, is

as much a function of political decisiveness and brokering as it is of military assertion. The unfortunate situation that military commanders face is that they are often introduced to a problem as a last resort when most political avenues have been exhausted. As can be seen in the case of Bosnia and Rwanda, such timing rarely provides the ideal basis for military effectiveness. The UN intervened in Bosnia at a time when there was no peace to keep and with no effective mandate. In the case of Rwanda, due to the lack of political will the UN reacted half-heartedly and too late. This situation is augmented by a poorly informed UN which results in inadequate mandates and the consequential difficulty in matching political goals and military end-states.

However, once the military wider peace-keeping operation has been established, and given appropriate mandates, the key role of military engineering is unquestioned. It underpins the very essence of wider peace-keeping, ie, the re-instatement of a nation's infrastructure so as to nurture its economic base and thus allow democratic self-reliance to emerge, as well as providing the traditional engineering roles as set out in Table 1. This is despite evidence that the doctrine of implementing wider peace-keeping tasks requires refinement (2, 6); problems of maintaining impartiality and consent are not always possible to resolve. Military engineering is key to wider peace-keeping but only at an operational level. The inability of the UN to adapt to the new geopolitical circumstances brought about by the end of the Cold War, however, has had an over-riding effect on the success of such operations despite the efficiency with which military operations are carried out. This situation is augmented by the lack of an effective, coherent, doctrine that should be adhered to by all members of multi-national peace-keeping forces. The role of decision-makers today should be to

enable the political structure and financing of the UN to reflect the new role in which it finds itself, thereby overcoming the problems outlined above. Otherwise the UN and peace-keeping will face an uncertain future. It seems a strange paradox that at the time when peace-keeping appears to be so important to world order its effective application has reached crisis point. In an increasingly violent world, the next few years will dictate the need and shape of peace-keeping operations.

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^{viii} UN peace-keeping is extremely costly, as can be seen by the number of operations depicted on the map. The UN routinely requests that member states pay their contributions for peace-keeping operations "on time and in full", but in practice only a few states submit their contributions within the requested 30 days. Recently, only approximately 50 per cent of requested bills were paid within 90 days for peace-keeping requirements. (14) This has the knock-on effect of creating a gap between mandates and means as well as lowering the morale of peace-keepers, especially those of developing nations who tend to wait for the UN reimbursement before paying their troops.

^{ix} Though such problems were anticipated by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his report "An Agenda for Peace" (1992) he suggested that these could be avoided by the UN possessing a self-contained rapid reaction force of 30,000 troops, streamlining the UN structure and financial restructuring. However, due to a lack of political will, none of these have been achieved.